
National Wildland Fire Outlook
National Interagency Fire Center
Predictive Services Group

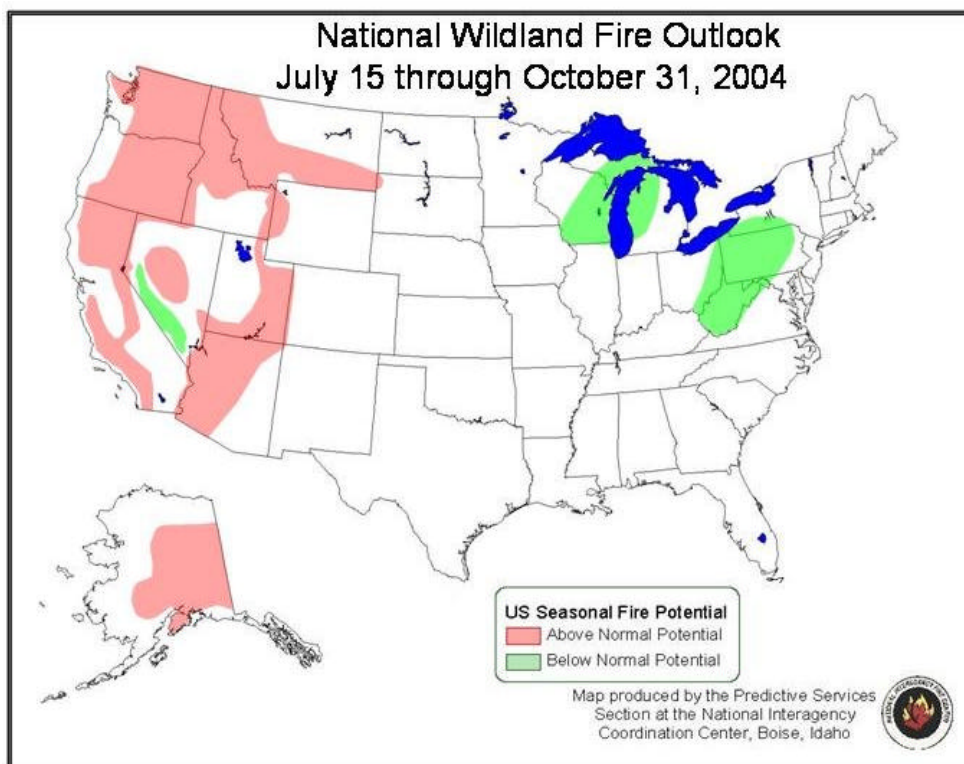


Issued: July 15, 2004

Wildland Fire Outlook – July 15 through October 2004

The number of acres burned nationally is well above normal, due primarily to significant fire activity in Alaska. As of July 14, the number of acres burned (3,444,561) is nearly twice (190%) as large as normal with over 2.5 million acres of the total due to Alaskan fires. Acres burned in the lower 48 states is about 70 percent of normal. **Alaska and portions of the West face the potential for an above normal fire season** for the following reasons:

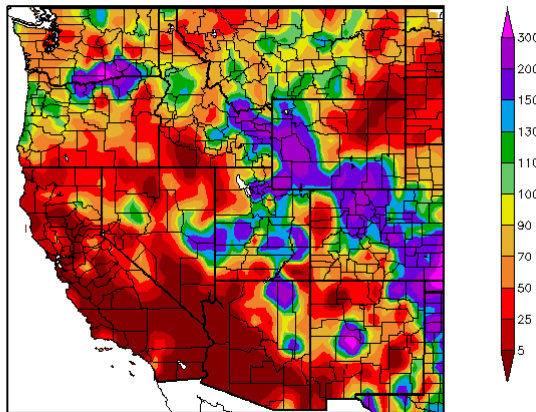
- Normally, the Alaska fire season begins to wane in July as summer thunderstorms bring rain and higher humidity. However, this season will run longer than normal because the extremely hot and dry summer has dried the fuels to such an extent that widespread heavy rains will be needed to moderate fire conditions. Also, July showers have been spotty, and this month has been hotter than normal with low humidity.
- The recent hot weather in the West has accelerated the drying of fuels. Fire danger has greatly increased with fire danger indices higher than normal for this time of the year.
- The weather outlook for August through October calls for hotter than normal temperatures in the West. California and the Great Basin are expected to be drier than usual.
- Drought conditions and tree/brush mortality from insect damage has increased the risk of large fires across much of the West.



Weather

The West saw near to above normal temperatures in June except for cooler than average weather east of the Continental Divide. It was also drier than normal except for wet weather in portions of Wyoming, Colorado and Utah. In Alaska, temperatures were unusually warm with Fairbanks reporting the second hottest June on record. June was also quite dry in Alaska, with many areas in the interior receiving less than half their normal rainfall.

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
6/1 - 6/30/2004

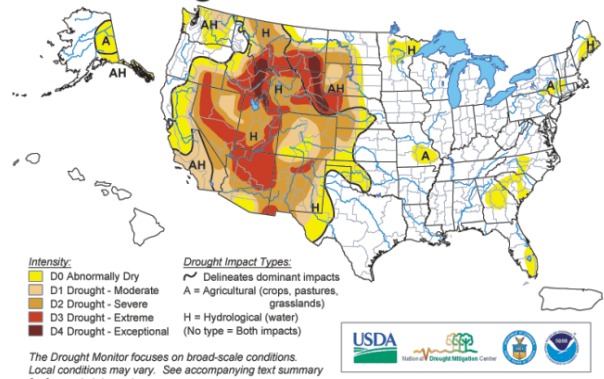


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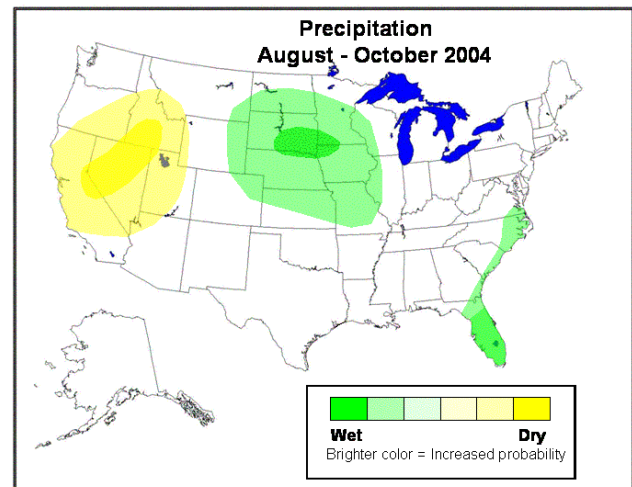
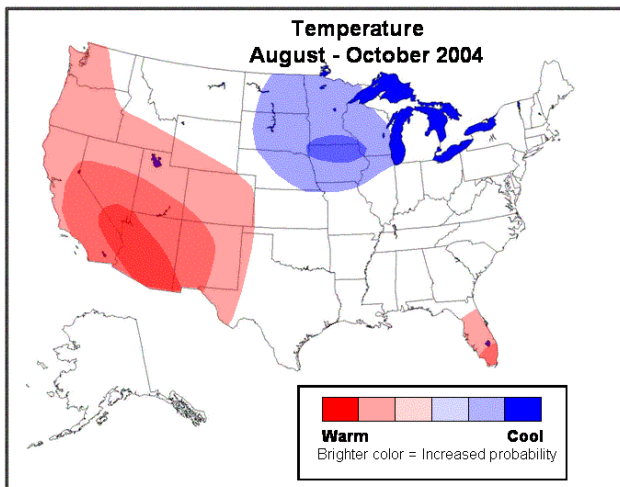
NOAA Regional Climate Centers

U.S. Drought Monitor

July 13, 2004
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



The last half of July through October is expected to be hotter than normal over much of the West. California and the Great Basin are expected to be drier than usual. In Alaska, the last half of July should see near to above normal temperatures along with near to below average rainfall. The outlook for August through October calls for near normal temperatures and precipitation.



Geographic Area Discussions

Alaska: Potential: Normal to Above Normal. Hot, dry weather in June and July has lead to significant fire activity across the central and eastern interior. Rainfall since June 1 has been less than 20 percent of normal in Fairbanks. By the middle of July, the fire season usually moderates but given the dryness of the fuels and lack of significant rainfall, the fire season will likely extend through the middle of August.

Southwest: Potential: Normal to Above Normal. The monsoon was late in developing but has now become established across most of the region. The only area with above average fire potential is in western and northern Arizona. Given the dryness of the fuels going into the monsoon, the area will likely experience fire activity into August, but the risk of large fires has been greatly reduced.

Northern Rockies: Potential: Normal to Above Normal. Despite recent rainfall over the last few weeks, the recent warming has increased fire activity with many areas noting fire danger indices higher than usual for this time of year. The larger fuels are quite dry, especially in northern Idaho and western Montana. These areas, along with southern Montana, have the greatest wildland fire potential. Fuel moistures in the Yellowstone National Park and Gallatin National Forest have increased to the point where normal fire danger is expected this summer.

Great Basin: Potential: Below Normal to Above Normal. The three month period of March, April and May was among the warmest on record. Precipitation was quite variable across the Area with above normal rainfall in central and western Idaho and southern Utah. Most of the timbered areas in the Great Basin have above normal fire potential due to the effects of drought and tree/shrub mortality. The below normal potential in southwest Nevada is due to the lack of fine fuels.

Northwest: Potential: Normal to Above Normal. Weather trends and fuel moisture indicators correlate very well with past fire seasons in the Northwest and are the basis for this year's fire season severity assessment. The outlook calls for an above average fire season for much of the Area due to a combination of drought, a below normal snowpack measured April 1, an earlier than normal snowmelt and a drier than normal June. Fire danger indices are currently higher than normal in many areas.

Northern and Southern California: Potential: Normal to Above Normal. The spring and summer have been warmer and drier than normal. The large fuels are showing very low moisture values with some readings in southern California at record low levels. Most areas are reporting above normal fire danger. Given that California summers are usually dry and the outlook for a hotter than normal summer, wildland fire potential is expected to be much higher than normal. Drought, tree mortality and brush dieback will also increase the potential for a severe fire season.

Rocky Mountain: Potential: Normal. June was quite wet and cool across much of the Area east of the Rockies, while monsoon rains have now moved into western Colorado. Fuel moisture projections through August show normal fire potential across the entire area. Overall, the Rocky Mountain Area will likely have the usual short durations of elevated fire danger and some large fires.

Eastern Area: Potential: Normal to Below Normal. Much of the Area has seen near to above normal rainfall over the last three months. While some areas could experience short periods of high fire danger, the overall potential for large fires in the Eastern Area is near to below normal.

Southern Area: Potential: Normal. Summer rainfall has greatly alleviated the potential for significant fire activity. Some areas in Florida remain drier than normal and may see increased fire danger for short periods. However, the region is expected to have normal potential for large fires.

Note: This national outlook and some geographic area assessments are currently available at the NICC and GACC websites. The GACC websites can also be accessed through the NICC webpage at: www.nifc.gov/news/pred_services/Main_page.htm